



H.R. 1462 – Platte River Recovery Implementation Program and Pathfinder Modification Authorization Act

FLOOR SITUATION

H.R. 1462 is being considered on the floor under suspension of the rules and will require a two-thirds majority vote for passage. This legislation was introduced by Representative Mark Udall (D-CO) on March 9, 2007. The bill was referred to the House Committee on Natural Resources and ordered reported by unanimous consent.

H.R. 1462 is expected to be considered on the floor of the House of Representatives on October 22, 2007.

BACKGROUND

The Western states have historically had problems with water and electricity due to the rural nature of their locations. The Platte River, which begins in Western Nebraska near the city of North Platte, has had a series of dams built along the length of the river. The dams provide hydroelectricity, flood control, and irrigation. An offshoot of the dams has been that they have changed the environment and are affecting some endangered species. These dams have been the subject of lawsuits (some spanning over a decade) and regulatory statutes. Many of the regulatory actions have been the result of the Endangered Species Act.

On July 1, 1997, the Governors of Nebraska, Wyoming, and Colorado, along with the Secretary of the Interior, met and entered into an agreement called the Platte River Recovery Implementation Program (The Program). The goal of the Program was to restore natural habitats to help protect four federally threatened or endangered species in Nebraska. This meeting also set up a Governance Committee (Committee) with representatives from the three states, federal agencies, environmental organizations and water users from the areas affected.

The first stage of the Project will take place over a period of 13 years and will help restore the habitats of the interior least tern, whooping crane, pallid sturgeon, and the piping plover. In order to accomplish this, land is needed from all three states in the hope of eventually establishing a 10,000 acre habitat. This will involve a complicated coordination of streams and rivers in order to increase water flow to the area when it is needed.

The Pathfinder Modification Project is designed to increase the capacity of the existing Pathfinder Reservoir in Wyoming. The modification of the reservoir would play a role in the overall goals of the Project.

SUMMARY

H.R. 1462 authorizes the Secretary of the Interior to engage in the Platte River Recovery Implementation Program and help in modifications to the Pathfinder Dam.

The legislation authorizes \$157,140,000 to be appropriated over the course of the 13 years of the Project. The three states involved will contribute \$30,000,000 and must contribute at least 50 percent of the total contributions necessary to carry out the Project.

COST

According to the Congressional Budget Office (CBO), “estimates that implementing H.R. 1462 would cost \$66 million over the 2008-2012 period, assuming appropriation of the authorized amounts. Enacting the bill would not affect direct spending or revenues”.

STAFF CONTACT

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